



*An update for all SWD employees and Operation RIO volunteers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.*

**A Message from Brigadier General Robert Crear:** To mark this, the final issue of RIO Update, I wanted to let you know how proud I am of everyone who has been involved in this mission.

Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil (RIO) as a separate entity now comes to an end. As RIO rolls up into the new Gulf Region Division, it is important to note what a magnificent year of accomplishments that RIO has experienced. We started with an ADVON team pulled together from across SWD in January 2003 to go to Camp Doha in Kuwait to set up operations for Task Force RIO. Our ADVON team labored under adverse conditions to set up computer systems, processes, and organizations to support those that followed them. We were in country before the war began....Soldiers, civilians, reservists, contractors and Iraqi civilians....all united in one mission. Our ranks included over 250 USACE volunteers from all 8 Divisions and 28 Districts and Centers as well as other federal agencies. Additionally, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and UK now wear the TF-RIO stamp. We would not have been successful without our other team members, over 500 personnel from our contractor Kellogg Brown and Roots and the 60,000 Iraqi oil workers.

In the last year the RIO team has successfully stood up the Iraqi north and south oil companies and became an integral partner with the Iraqi Oil Ministry, CPA and CJTF-7. Together, we made the Iraqi oil infrastructure operational again in spite of conditions, obstacles and sabotage. We handled additional unexpected missions as they came our way, finding ways to succeed. For instance, we took on the import of fuel for domestic use, a vital but, again, an unexpected mission of monstrous proportions, and made it work. Just last week, KBR imported the 1 billionth liter of fuel since May 2003. By doing so, we quelled unrest, assured fuel for a nation clamoring for resources for its people and proved once again that the Corps can take on any task, anywhere, any time. We formed friendships and lasting working relationships with people we had never met. We became a working family.

As we rotated soldiers, civilians, contractors and others in and out of theater, I was astounded by the quality of our people, by the abilities we had at our disposal, by our being able to reach out and touch exactly the expertise we needed. We certainly were not petroleum experts when this started nor are we now. But we knew where to find those experts and how to tap into them. We were fortunate to have people like you, willing to serve your country when it needed you in a cause that will promote peace, prosperity and democracy for the people of Iraq.

As Commander of Team RIO, I want you to know that this is the highlight of my military career. I will never forget the people who worked beside me on the ground or those who provided support in the form of reach back. I will forever be amazed by the international family that grew among us. And as for gratitude, I cannot express how very, very grateful I am for you, the Team RIO family, and for the challenges we conquered together.

Now the Gulf Region Division will travel through some of the same growing experiences that we have been through. As a directorate under the GRD, your finest hour is still before you. I know you will continue your superb performance for Major General Johnson and make him proud to have you in his command. I know you will continue to set the standard and become an integral part of the GRD command. SWD will continue to be part of the USACE family of reach back capability and can be counted on to provide continued quality support and resources for MG Johnson and the GRD family. I want to personally thank COL Lem Dubose for commanding TF-RIO in my absence. I am proud of his demonstrated exceptional leadership ability. As directorate chief, I know he will ensure that you are a full partner and continue to set the pace.

My thanks and my heartfelt gratitude for all you have done and all you do!

HOO-AAH!!!

**Critical Vacancies:** To ensure continued success for the RIO Directorate, GRD, volunteers are needed for the following vacancies: GS-14 Area Engineer; GS-13 Project Engineers; GS-13 Project Managers; GS-13 Chief, IM; GS-12, Information Technology Specialist; GS-13 Auditor; GS-11 Security Specialist, GS-11/12 Contract Specialist. Contact Jim Barton, 214-767-2370, or Linda Ranallo, 817-886-1193, for additional information.

**Vignette: Carolyn Ross**

Article and photos by Carolyn Vadino  
(Ross returned 13 Dec 03)

As a single mother of two children ages nine and 13, Carolyn Ross had to really contemplate why she wanted to come to Iraq. For a woman with more than 23 years of government experience, the choice was somewhat difficult.

"I was interested in being part of the mission and coming here myself to see the reality of the situation," said Ross.

Long having a desire to work overseas, Ross left her Corps job in Maryland one year ago for a position as a contract specialist with the Corps at Wiesbaden, Germany. When the opportunity came up for temporary duty in Iraq, and after reviewing the position as it aligns to her long-term career objectives, Ross decided it would be great a experience.

"I was pretty scared based on what I had seen and read in the news," she said reflecting on her initial thoughts. "Iraq is Iraq regardless, and there was real concern for safety, but once I got here and saw the situation and how this area is pretty safe, it consequently made me more relaxed."

Ross has dealt with contract issues for the Corps contractor KBR, supporting Task Force RIO's mission. In that capacity, she has provided contract administration and key documents for the Administrative Contracting Officer. Ross has also had the opportunity to go out into the oil fields to see the projects firsthand.

"In the states we do site visits to see progress and what we are buying, where it is going and what was the outcome of the product," she said. "Here, I have done a few site visits to view progress. It was interesting to see how the refinery works and to see how the different cluster

pump stations operate; what each of them do, the equipment we are buying and seeing them installed and put to use by the Iraqis.”

Driving to the sites throughout southern Iraq provided Ross the opportunity to see the locals living in their natural environment.

“What surprised me the most was the living conditions of the Iraqis, you wouldn’t really believe it unless you have seen it for yourself,” she said describing some of the mud and clay shacks and families living in tents along the pipelines.



She said working here has put everything into perspective, and not to take anything for granted. It is advice that she has passed along to her children, whom she has made an effort to speak to at least twice a week.

“My kids are more interested in the work, and what I am doing during the day,” she said. “I told them more or less about the living conditions and to be thankful for what they have, even if it is minute, it is more than what the kids here have.”

She has also gone out of her way to send small gifts home, shopping in Kuwait and also from the little stands outside the Post Exchange at Camp Doha.

“I bought backpacks with Iraqi names for my children, *Power Puffs*, T-shirts, and some gold Kartouche - the necklaces with the American name on one side and the Arabic name on the other side.”

Since Ross initially worked in Kuwait upon her arrival, she was also able to experience the difference in Kuwaiti and Iraqi culture.

“I noticed that Kuwait is more Americanized,” she said discussing her time in the country. “It feels like a little America, everyone speaks English and Arabic and the majority of Kuwaitis know good English, so there wasn’t a large language barrier.”

While living at Camp Doha, Ross was able to unwind and watch television, go to the movies or shop. In Iraq, Ross was a little more limited.

“I have a movie collection,” she said laughing, knowing everyone at camp knows about her love for movies. “I have all types of movies, and I enjoy movies, the kids enjoy movies and when you live in Germany you only have three channels, the movie collection is more enjoyable. I have more than 400 DVDs, probably close to 500 now since I have been here. I am more excited about getting home and putting them in my cases to see what I have.”

Also, she said this experience has been a good time for self-reflection.

“I realized I more or less want to focus on my career and focus on building strong relationships with family, self and god,” she said. “We have a good relationship, me and my two kids. This has made them appreciate me more, and I appreciate them more. They are all I have, and this break will bring us closer together.”

When Ross isn’t watching movies or talking to her children, she also has enjoyed spending time with the people she works with.

"Another thing that surprised me most was the people in our trailer, even though everyone was different and everyone had a different background, it wasn't a problem," she said. "There was mutual respect for each person and it made the people in trailer get along very well."

Ross said that being in Iraq has made her miss the United States even more.

"My kids are excited I am coming back home, and they want to make sure they have the house all cleaned for me. When I get home, we are going to get ready for Christmas."

Ross said she and the kids are planning to make it back to her hometown of Dayton, Ohio for the holidays. She also plans to have one week to herself, taking a cruise to either the Mediterranean or Rio De Janeiro.

Ross said that she can see the value of this mission and that being here has given her a sense of accomplishment. She encourages anyone that is thinking about it, to volunteer.

"This is an experience I will never forget and I would come back again," she said reflecting on her time here. "There is a mission that needs to be accomplished and can't be accomplished without volunteers."

**Previous editions of RIO Updates are available at <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cepa/iraq/RIOupdates/RIOupdates.htm>; and to read vignettes on other team members, please see <http://www.hq.usace.army.mil/cepa/iraq/vignettes.htm>.**

**"HOOAH!!"**

*Robert Crear  
Brigadier General, US Army  
Commanding  
USAED, Southwestern*